

## Gettysburg / Resources

### **Resource #9. Contemporary Views of the Lincoln Administration** (for Learning Activity #3)

*From the National Intelligencer, September 23, 1862:*

"This new proclamation with regard to the contingent emancipation of slaves in the insurgent states not being self-enforcing any more than the proclamation of Gen. Hunter in regard to the immediate emancipation of slaves in the states of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, the only difference between the two papers resides in the signatures respectively attached to them. And as, in themselves considered, they are likely to prove equally void of practical effect, we are not without the suspicion that the President has taken this method to convince the only class of persons likely to be pleased with this proclamation of the utter fallacy of the hopes they have founded upon it. This opinion, we may add, derives confirmation from the fact that he suspends for some months the enforcement of so much of his declaration as denounces the emancipation of slaves in punishment for contumacy on the part of the "insurgent states."

*From the Chicago Times, September 24, 1862:*

"If utter desperation had not before seized the people of the rebel states, as a consequence of the abolition and confiscation measures of the Congress at Washington, it will seize them now. The war hereafter, on their part, will be a contest for existence as communities and individuals.

"We protest against this proclamation, in the name of the constitution, in behalf of good faith to the conservative millions of the northern and border states, and for the sake of the only means by which it has at any time been possible to restore the Union. We protest against it as a monstrous usurpation, a criminal wrong, and an act of national suicide."

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*From the Chicago Tribune, September 24, 1862:*

"We speak only to true men and patriots. To those who love slavery better than their country and their country's flag, and who echo the atrocious sentiment of the Chicago Times, that 'the Government, by act of the President, is itself in rebellion,' we have only to say that the sooner they shoulder muskets and step into the ranks of Jeff. Davis the sooner they will take their true places and act out the real sentiments of their hearts. But the great body of the people, Democrats as well as Republicans, will come up as one man to the support of the government in its faithful efforts to preserve the Union. Upon the heaven defying traitors who have drawn the sword against their country rests the responsibility of the act. They can even now prevent its taking effect by laying down their arms and returning to their allegiance. If they choose that the blow shall fall let it fall, and let all the people say Amen!"

*From the Louisville Journal, October 1862:*

"The Government our fathers framed is one thing, and a thing above price; Abraham Lincoln, the temporary occupant of the Executive chair, is another thing and a thing of comparatively little worth. The one is an individual, the sands of whose official existence shall end, will be no more of less than any other individual. The other is a grand political structure, in which is contained the treasures and energies of civilization, and upon whose lofty and shining dome, seen from the shores of all climes, centre the eager hopes of mankind. What Abraham Lincoln, as President, does or fails to do may exalt or lower our estimate of himself, but not of the great and beneficent Government of which he is but the temporary servant. The temple is not the less sacred and precious because the priest lays an unlawful sacrifice upon the altar."

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*From Harriet Beecher Stowe:*

"Lincoln is a strong man, but his strength is of a peculiar kind: it is not aggressive so much as passive, and among passive things, it is like the strength not so much of a stone buttress as of a wire cable. It is strength swaying to every influence, yielding on this side and on that to popular needs, yet tenaciously and inflexibly bound to carry its great end and probably by no other kind of strength could our national ship have been drawn so safely thus far during the tossings and tempests which beset her way. ...

"Slow and careful in coming to resolutions, willing to talk with every person who has anything to show on any side of a disputed subject, long in weighing and pondering, attached to constitutional limits and time-honored landmarks, Lincoln certainly (is) the safest leader a nation could have at a time when habeas corpus must be suspended, and all the constitutional and minor rights or citizens thrown into the hands of their military leader. A reckless, bold, theorizing dashing man of genius might have wrecked our Constitution and ended us in a splendid military despotism."

*From the Lawrence (Kansas) Republican, May 21, 1863:*

De darkeys feel so lonesome libbin'  
In de log house on de lawn,  
Dey move dere tings in massa's parlor  
For to keep it while he's gone;  
Dere's wine an' cider in de cellar,  
An' de darkey's dey'll hab some  
I spec' dey'll all be confiscated  
When de Linkum gunboats come.

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*From Ralph Waldo Emerson:*

"The extreme moderation with which the President advanced to his design,— his long-avowed expectant policy, as if he chose to be strictly the executive of the best public sentiment of the country, waiting only till it should be unmistakably pronounced,— so fair a mind that none ever listened so patiently to such extreme variations of opinions,— so reticent that his decision has taken all parties by surprise, whilst yet it is the just sequel of his prior acts,— the firm tone in which he announces it, without inflation or surplusage,— all these have bespoken such favor to the act, that, great as the popularity of the President has been, we are beginning to think that we have underestimated the capacity and virtue which the Divine Providence has made an instrument of benefit so vast. He has been permitted to do more for America than any other American man. He is well entitled to the most indulgent construction. Forget all that we thought shortcomings, every mistake, every delay. In the extreme embarrassments of his part, call these endurance, wisdom, magnanimity, illuminated, as they now are, by this dazzling success."

*From Frederick Douglass:*

"I went directly to the White House and saw for the first time the President of the United States. Was received cordially and saw at glance the justice of the popular estimate of his qualities expressed in the prefix Honest to the name Abraham Lincoln."